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Message Text

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---------- 102596
R 290455Z MAY 75
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4783
INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
DIA WASHDC
CINCPAC HON
COMUSMACTHAI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PFOR, EGEN, MILI, CB
SUBJ: THE NEW CAMBODIA

SUMMARY: CAMBODIA'S NEW LEADERS HAVE KEPT THEMSELVES EFFECTIVELY HIDDEN ALTHOUGH HINTS OF A POWER STRUGGLE INCLUDE RUMORS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN "NATIONALISTS" AND PRO-VIETNAMESE" ELEMENTS. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT LINES OF AUTHORITY STILL RUN ALONG MILITARY CHAINS OF COMMAND. LOCAL COMMANDERS APPARENTLY HAVE CONSIDERABLE AUTONOMY AND HAVE FREELY EXERCISED THEIR AUTHORITY, SOMETIMES TO THE NATIONAL EMBARASSMENT. THE KHMER COMMUNISTS (KC) CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A RADIO BROADCAST IMAGE OF THEIR SOCIETY THAT DOES NOT SQUARE WITH WHAT WE KNOW IS REALITY. PUBLICLY, KHMER
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SOCIETY IS UNCHANGED AND THE COUNTRY IS IN THE MIDST OF

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A MASSIVE CLEAN-UP OF WAR DEBRIS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF HIGHWAYS, IARFILEDS, FACTORIES, AND PORTS. A MASSIVE RICE AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION OFFENSIVE IS UNDERWAY. ACTUALLY, THE FORCED EVACUATION OF PHNOM PENH AND OTHER TOWNS HAS CAUSED MANY DEATHS ESPECAILLY AMONG THE OLD, VERY YOUNG, ILL, AND INFORM. WITHOUT MAJOR RICE SHIPMENTS MANY MORE WILL PROBABLY DIE BEFORE THE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER HARVESTS. THE CHINESE ARE THE WIDEST RANGING FOREIGN PRESENCE WITH SHIPS IN KOMPONG SOM, AIR TRAFFIC TO POCHENTONG, AND POSSIBLY SOME SORT OF EMBASSY IN PHNOM PENH. THE VIETNAMESE DOUBTLESS STILL HAVE HOME UNITS IN THEIR OLD BASE AREAS AND ADVISORS WITH THE CPNLAF (THE CAMBODIAN ARMY). SIHANOUK CONTINUES TO FIND EXCUSES TO PUT OFF HIS RETURN TO CAMBODIA, AND SOME IN HIS ENTOURAGE ARE REPORTEDLY WONDERING WHETHER THEY WILL EVER RETURN. THE PRINCE IS FOLLOWING THE PARY LINE WITH THE UNACCUSTOMED DILIGENCE THAT HAS MARKED HIS BEHAVIOR SINCE JUST BEFORE THE 1974 UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. PERHAPS HE HAS CURBED HIS UNRULY TONGUE IN THE HOPE THAT CAMBODIA'S NEW MANAGEMENT WILL LET HIM BACK IN IF IT SEES HE CAN BEHAVE HIMSELF. END SUMMARY.

GOVERNMENT

1. THE NEW CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET FULLY ORGANIZED AND IS APPARENTLY ENGAGED IN A POWER STRUGGLE. ONLY DEFENSE MINISTER AND ARMY COMMANDER KHIEU SAMPHAN AND INFORMATION MINISTER HU NIM ARE PHNOM PENH RADIO REGULARS. OTHER ELEMENTS OF CAMBODIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE KHMER COMMUNIST PARTY (CCKCP), ARE STILL HIDDEN FIGURES. INTERNAL LINES OF AUTHORITY ARE NOT CLEAR. RUMORS OCCASIONALLY SURFACE THAT KHIEU SAMPHAN'S NATIONALIST FACTION IS IN CONFLICT WITH THE ALLEGEDLY PRO-HANOI HARD-LINE COMMUNISTS UNDER IENG SARY. AN UNVERIFIED THAI NEWSPAPER REPORT MAY 22 SUGGESTED THAT IENG SARY'S MEN HAD SHOT AND KILLED KHIEU SAMPHAN. RADIO PHNOM PENH'S LAST MENTION OF KHIEU SAMPHAN PLACED HIM AT A MAY 17 RALLY.

2. STRONG EVIDENCE FOR THE LACK OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION IS THE APPARENT AUTONOMY WHICH LOCAL COMMANDERS
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ENJOY. REFUGEES FROM THE FRENCH EMBASSY SAID THAT THEIR CONVOY COMMANDER NEGOTIATED TRANSIT OF EACH AREA OF OPERA-TIONS THEY PASSED THROUGH ON THE WAY TO THE THAI BORDER.

LOCAL COMMANDERS NEAR THE THAI BORDER HAVE DEMANDED THE RETURN OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT; OPENED TRADE IN ESSENTIAL GOODS AT POIPET; AND THREATENED TO ATTACK IF THE THAI FAILED TO CEDE TO CAMBODIA UP

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TO A KILOMETER OF TRAT PROVINCE. ALONG THE GULF OF SIAM,
THE KOH KONG COMMANDER CONTINUED TO USE THEDESPISED
REPULICA CURRENY IN THE MARKET AS LATE AS MAY 1,
FINALLY, LOCAL INITIATIVE IS ALIKELY EXPLANATION BEHIND
THE SEIZURE OF THE AMERICAN MERCHANT SHIP, MAYAGUEZ.

3. TWO OF THESE INITIATIVES SINGALLY EMBARRASED THE
CAMDODIAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE KHMER EVIDENTLY MISREAD
AMERICAN INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITY IN THE MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR,
AND DECIDED TO BLUSTER IT OUT BY UNORIGINALLY CLAIMING
THAT THE SHIP WAS ON AN INTELLIGENCE AND SABOTAGE MISSION.
THEY FINALLY HANDED OVER THE CREW UNHARMED. THE THAI
REACTED STRONGLY TO THE TERRITORIAL DEMANDS. THE THAI
FOREIGN MINISTER NOTED MAY 19 THAT PHNOM PENH RADIO HAD
DENIED REPORTS THAT CAMBODIA DEMANDED THAT THE THAI MOVE
THEIR BORDER BACK A KILOMETER. AS THE KHMER NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT GETS ORGANIZED, AND PRESUMABLY REDUCES ITS
INTERNAL CONFLICTS, LOCAL COMMANDERS SHOULD INCREAINGLY FALL
UNDER THE RIGID DISCIPLINE WHICH KC IDEOLOGY DEMANDS.

INTERNAL ACTIVITIES

4. FOR EXTERNAL CONSUMPTION, PHNOM PENH RADIO IS PRO-
JECTING AN IMAGE OF A BASICALLY UNCHANGED KHMER SOCIETY
WHICH NOW HAS NEW LEADERSHIP AND IS MOVING IN PURER
DIRECTIONS. BUDDHIST MONKS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE RESPECTFUL
MENTION ON NATIONAL RADIO. A MAY 12 BROADCAST INDICATES
THAT THE NEW LEADERSHIP SEES 95 PERCENT OF CAMBODIAN SOCIETY AS
MADE UP OF "WORKERS, POOR FARMERS, MIDDLE-LOWER CLASS
FARMERS, AND OTHER LABORERS." THE MILITARY, FUNCTIONARIES,
MONKS, LAYMEN, THE MIDDLE-CLASS, AND INTELLECTUALS ALL
ALL FIT IN THE REMAINING BUT "PATRIOTIC" FIVE PER CENT.
THE NEW CAMBODIA IS WORKING TO RESTORE "TRADITIONAL KHMER
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VALUES" AFTER THEIR STORIED EROSION DURING FIVE YEARS
EXPOSIRE TO THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE.

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PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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---------- 102885
R 290455Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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5. NATIONAL RADIO HAS ALL OF CAMBODIA ENGAGED IN A "PRODUCTION OFFENSIVE." SVAY RIENG, NEAK LUONG, KAMPOT, AND SIEN REAP ARE NOTABLE RICE PLANTING SUCCESSES. THE GOVERNMENT RADIO HAS NOT DIRECTLY MENTIONED THE EVACUATION OF CAMBODIAN CITIES AND TOWNS NOR HAS IT AS YET DESCRIBED PROODUCTION SUCCESSES IN AREAS WHICH RECEIVED THE POPULATION OF PHNOM PENH: ROUTE 5 BETWEEN OUDONG AND PURSAT AND ROUTE 7 EAST FROM THE PREK KDAM FERRY TOWARD KOMPONG CHAM; SOUTHEAST ALONG ROUTE 1 TOWARD NEAK LUONG AND SOUTH ALONG ROUTE 3 WEST OF TAKEO.

6. FOREIGNERS (INDIANS AND FILIPINO) MISTAKENLY FORCED OUT OF PHNOM PENH WITH THE REST OF THE CAPITAL'S POPULATION SAY THAT MANY OF THE OLD, VERY YOUNG, ILL AND INFORM DIED DURING THE SHORT TIME THEY MARCHED WITH THE CONVOY. CHOLERA CONFIDENTIAL

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BROKE OUT IN THE COLUMN HEADING NORTH; FOOD WAS SHORT AND CLEAN WATER UNAVAILABLE. ALL ESTIMATES ARE THAT CAMBODIA DOES NOT HAVE ENOUGH RICE TO FEED ITS POPULATION AND PROVIDE SEED FOR INCREASED CULTIVATION. THE CHINES ARE SHIPPING RICE IN, ACCORDING TO ONE EPORT, AND THE KHMER PUBLICLY MADE REPAIR OF ROUTE 4 FROM THE PORT AT KOMPONG SOM TO PHNOM PENH A MATTER OF HIGH PRIORITY. CAMBODIA WILL NEED

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LARGE RICE DELIVERIES TO AVOID MASS STARVATION BEFORE THE NOVEMBER:/DECEMBER HARVESTS.

7. THE LEADERSHIP EXEMPTED SOME TECHNICALLY SKILLED PEOPLE FROM THE EVACUATION (HIGHWAY AND RAILWAY EMPLOYEES IN POIPET, FOR EXAMPLE). THERE IS THUS AN INDICATION OF INTENT TO RE-ENTER THE CITIES. NATIONAL RADIO HAS MADE MUCH OF THE REOPENING OF PHNOM PENH PORT AND OF THE MEKONG TO SMALL SHIPS. ROUTE 1 FROM PHNOM PENH TO NEAK LUONG IS OPEN, AND THE RADIO ANTICIPATES EARLY REOPENING OF THE REMAINING STRETCH THROUGH SVAY REING TO THE VIETNAMESE BORDER. WORK IS UNDERWAY TO RESTORE THE CHNINESE-DONATED TEXTILE AND JUTEL FACTOIRES IN BATTAMBNG, AND THE TEXTILE AND DRY CELL BATTERY PLANTTS IN PHNOM PENH. LARGE JET AIR-CRAFT WERE USING POCHENTONG AIRFILED SHORTLY AFTER PHNOM PENH FELL. MORE RECENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT PEIPLE, TOO, ARE SLOWLY MOVING INTO PHNOM PENH. IF THESE REPORT ARE ACCURATE, CAMBODIA'S NEW LEADERS MUST STILL SEE PHNOM PENH AS A HUB AND ARE WORKING TO ENSURE ITS COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE.

INTERNATIONAL

8. THE CHINESE ARE THE GREATEST VISIBLE FOREIGN INFLUENCE INSIDE CAMBODIA. THEIR FREIGHTERS ARE IN KOMPONG SOM. THEY LANDED THREE JETS AT POCHENTONG WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE CAPITAL'S FALL, AND REPORTEDLY HAVE SOME SORT OF EMBASSY TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE COMMANDER OF THE KC FORCES WHICH TOOK KOMPONG SOM LOOKED PURE CHINESE, ACCORDING TO AN AMERICAN PRIVATE AIRLINE PILOT HELD IN THE PORT CITY AND RELEASED MAY 3. THAT OFFICER, WHO IS PROBABLY ETHNIC CHINESE BORN IN CAMBODIA SPOKE CHINESE WITH THE TAIWANESE AIRLINE PILOTS. PEKING, HOWECER, EITHER DID NOT EMPLOY ITS INFLUENCE OR DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH TO PROTECT PHNOM
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PENH'S CHINESE COMMUNITY, WHICH SUFFERED GRIEVOUSLY FROM THE EVACUATION. KHMER REFUGEES COULD INSPAN THEIR OEXEN AND MOVE ON SHORT NOTICE BUT THE CHINESE LEFT BEHIND GENERATIONS OF ACCUMLATED POSSESSIONS. SOFTER-LIVING CHINESE ELDERS MUST ALSO HAVE HAD A HIGH MORTALITY RATE ON THE MARCH.

9. WE HAVE LITTLE CURRENT INFORMATION HERE ON THE NVA/VC PRESENCE IN CAMBODIA BUT PRESUME SOME REAR SERVICES UNITS ARE STILL ALONG THE TRAIL. VIETNAMESE ADVISORS ARE ALSO PROBALBY STILL WITH SOME OF THEIR KHMER UNITS, AND ONE REFUGEE REPORTED VIETNAMESE "IN COMMAND" ON ROUTE 5 WEST OF THE GREAT LAKE. THE NEWKHMER GOVERNMENT CELEBRATED THE NVA/VC VICTORY WITH ALARGE RALLY IN PHNOM PENH MAY 17

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WHICH SUGGESTS THAT AT LEAST SOME VIETNAMESE WERE IN THE
CAPITAL TO APPRECIATE THE SPECITACLE.

10. CAMBODIA BEHAVED TOTALLY CORRECTLY IN ITS FIRST CONTACT
WITH AMERICANS AFTER THEIR VICTORY. AMERICANS MADE PRISONER
AFTER THE FALL REPORTED THAT THE NEW AUTHORITIES, WHETHER IN
PHNOM PENH OR KOMPONG SOM, TREATED THEM JUST AS THEY TREATED
OTHER NATIONALITIES. AS MENTIONED EARLIER, IN THE ABSENCE OF
HARD EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY, WE CONTINUE TO CREDIT THE POSSIBILITY
THAT THE MAYAGUEZ SEIZURE WAS THE INITIATIVE OF A LOCAL COMMANDER.
THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS SUGGESTS THAT THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP
INITALLY DECIDED TO BACK THE ACTION BUT CHANGED ITS MIND
WHEN IT UNDERSTOOD THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS COMMITTED TO
REGAIN THE SHIP AND CREW. OF NOTE IS THAT THE KHMER RETURNED
THE CREW INTACT WHEN THEY COULD HAVE MURDERED THEM OR TAKEN
THEM TO INLAND PRISONS. ALL OF THIS SUGGEST THAT THE
NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IS UNWILLING TO CONFRONT THE UNITED
STATES AT A TIME WHEN IT HAS SO MUCH TO DO AT HOME.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

NEA-10 EB-07 AGR-05 AID-05 /096 W
---------- 102912
R 290455Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4785
INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
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SIHANOUK

11. NORODOM SIHANOUK'S ROLE, OR RATHER LACK OF ROLE, IN CAMBODIA SINCE THE INSURGENT VITORY IS PROFF OF THE SMALL INFLUENCE HE HAS HAD IN RECENT YEARS ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS. SIHANOUK CONTINUES TO MAKE EXCUSES ABOUT HIS FAILURE TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA.FIRST IT WAS HIS MOTHER'S DEATH; NOW IT IS THE DESTRUCTION OF WATER AND ELECTRIC PLANTS IN PHNOM

PENH. PRO-SIHANOUK OFFICERS TOLD REFUGEES IN THE FRENCH EMBASSY COMPOUND THAT THE PRINCE WILL RETURN ONCE CAMBODIA IS "ORGANIZED." SOME OF HIS ENTOURAGE, HOWEVER, REPORTEDLY DESPAIR AT EVER RETURNING TO THEIR COUNTRY. IF THE NEW LEADERSHIP EVER LETS SIHANOUK RETURN, IT WILL DO SO ONLY UNDER RIGEID CONTROL. HIS STILL STRONG APPEAL TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PEASANTRY, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE RECENT MONTHS OF SUFFERING, WOULD GIVE THE KC CONSIDERABLE PAUSE. THEY MIGHT HOWEVER TIE A SIHANOUK VISIT TO CAMBODIA TO A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EVENT SUCH AS CAMBODIA'S RE-ENTRY INTO THE UNITED NATIONS. THEIR AIM MIGHT BE TO KEEP SIHANOUK UNDER WRAPS IN PHNOM PENH SO HE COULD NOT STEAL THEIR SHOW IN NEW YORK.

12. COMMENT: THE HARD INFORMATION COMING OUT OF CAMBODIA IS THIN BUT SHOWS A DETERMINED KC EFFORT TO FORM CAMBODIAN SOCIETY TO FIT THEIR DOCTRINE. CAMBODIA REALLY HAD ONLY TWO STRONG INSTITUTIONS. THE REPUBLICANS ABOLISHED THE MONARCH AND THE KC ARE LETTING ITS VESTIGES WITHER AWAY IN PEKING. THE KC HAVE TACKLED THE SANGHA, A FAR STRONGER INSTITUTION BECAUSE BUDDHISM IS SO DEEPLY ROOTED IN CAMBODIA. ONCE THESE TWO INSTITUTIONS ARE GONE, ONLY THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE ARMY WILL BE LEFT. WE SAW KC TACTICS FOR CHANGING SOCIETY EVEN BEFORE THEIR VICTORY: FORCED EVACUATION; A RETURN TO THE SOIL; DEFROCKING MONKS; RIGID CONTROL OF POPULATION WHETHER OF MARRIAGE OR TRAVEL; AND, ULTIMATELY, COMMUNIZATION. THE KC HAVE ACCELERATED THIS PROGRAM IN THE WAKE OF THEIR VICTORY.

13. PREVIOUS REPORTING INDICATES THAT THE KHMER COMMUNISTS ARE AWARE OF THE DANGER TO THEIR NATIONAL SURVIVAL FROM THE DYNAMIC VIETNAMESE. UNFORTUNATELY WE DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ON THE POWER OF THE PRO-VIETNAMESE FACTION,NOR DO WE REALLY KNOW WHAT THE ULTIMATE AIMS OF THE PRO-HANOI GROU ARE. WE CAN BE SUEE, HOWEVER,THAT INTERNATIONALLY CAMBODIA, WHILE CONTINUING TO ASSERT ITS NEUTRAILTY, WILL ASSOCIATE WITH A COMMON INDOCHINESE POSITION. CHINESE

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COMMUNIST SUPPORT WILL BE CRITICAL TO LONG-RANGE CAMBODIAN FREEDM OF ACTION. WE EXPECT THAT, ASSUMING A PRO-HANOI FACTION DOES NOT TAKE TOTAL CONTROL, SINO-KHMER RELATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP WITH THE KHMER KEEPING A WEATHER EYE ON THEIR VIETNAMESE NEIGHBORS.
WHITEHOUSE

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